



The Navy Lark Appreciation Society Newsletter

NAVY DAYS



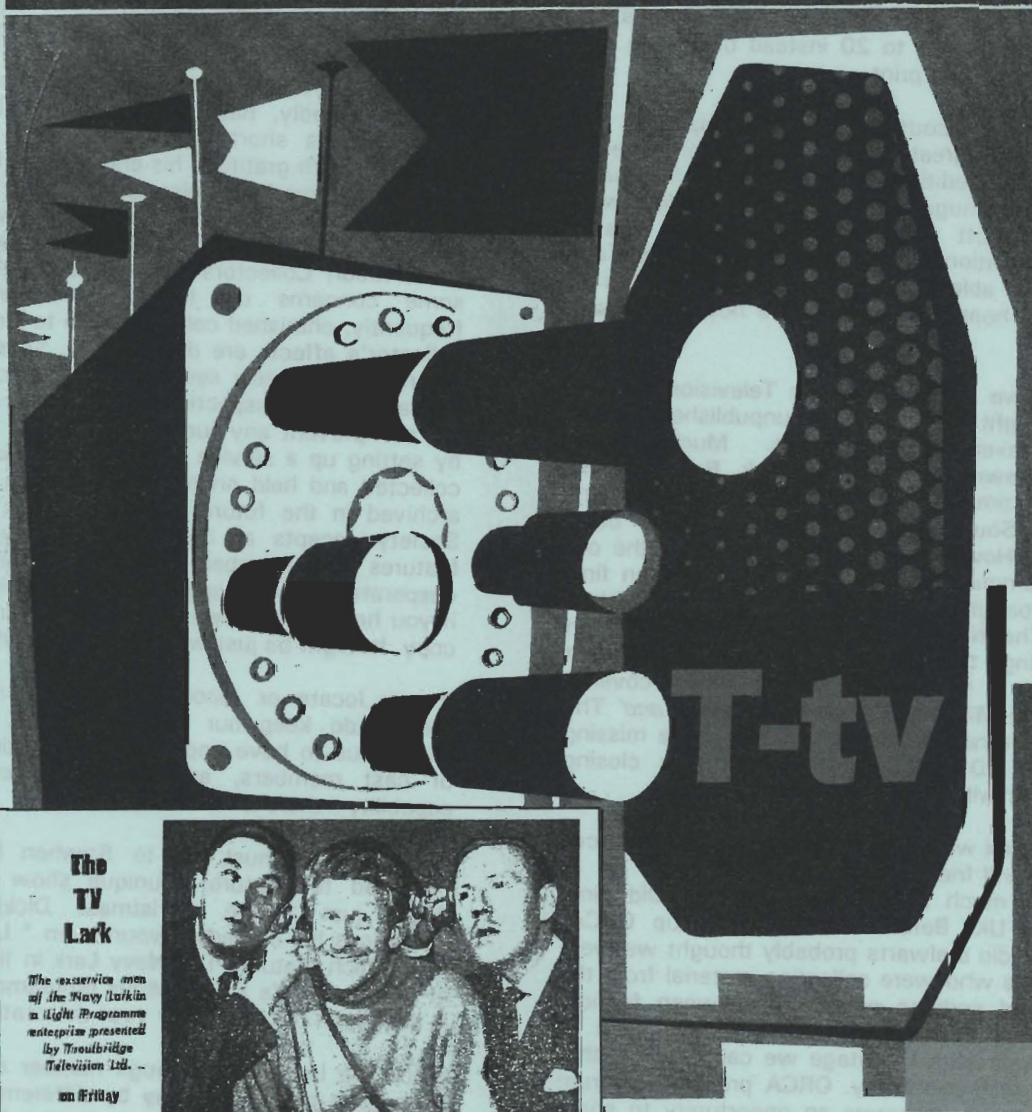
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BBC SOUND AND TELEVISION
PROGRAMMES ... January 19 - 25

RADIO TIMES

JOURNAL OF THE BBC

PRICE THREEPENCE



The TV Lark

The ex-servicemen
off the Navy Lark in
a light programme
enterprise presented
by Troubridge
Television Ltd. -

on Friday





BUNG HO!

Firstly apologies to everyone waiting for this issue. Events here at NLAS HQ have conspired to keep your editor *extremely* busy and this has resulted in a 'lost' issue. Due to my inability to get 4 magazines out in 2004, people anticipating a subscription reminder this January will be pleased to learn that it will arrive in the May magazine! NOT before. Although the Post Office is revising its postage charges I think we can peg the donation at £8.00 for a further 12 months. By revising the page count to 20 instead of 24 we can save .20P per copy we print.

The exciting thing about each new magazine is the chance to deliver great news about a very special radio show. This edition is no different. We have managed to get a huge article from Evelyn Wells who was Alastair Scott Johnston's PA. Evelyn has a wealth of information about her BBC years and we are privileged to be able to share those reminiscences in this issue and hopefully again in the not too distant future!

In this issue we visit Troutbridge Television Service and get a sight of previously unpublished studio photographs taken by Evelyn Wells. Much interest has been shown in the Springbok Radio article published last time. Sadly, my endeavours to acquire copies of South African shows has been unsuccessful. However, I maintain links with the old time radio community there and I hope we can find someone prepared to give us a potted history of their version of *The Navy Lark*. I am able to reprint an article relating to the production side of light entertainment in the Durban studios which covered *Men From The Ministry*, *Father Dear Father* and *The Navy Lark*. The next script instalment of the missing show from 12.01.1962 continues on the closing pages together with what is new audio-wise.

At this juncture I would like to extend my condolences to the family and friends of Barry Hill. Barry Hill did much to raise the profile of Old Time Radio in the UK. Before his interest group ORCA, many of us radio stalwarts probably thought we were just individuals who were collecting material from the air waves and perhaps passing it between friends. Barry managed to raise awareness of the need to archive the marvellous heritage we call wireless that streams our way every day. ORCA provided a forum which gave many collectors an opportunity to share an interest and exchange information. The internet was yet to become the force it now is, so the opportunities and research published through newsletters provided particulars and stories not too widely available. Acquaintances recall that Barry's

house in the UK was unique. It contained tapes and cassettes floor to ceiling in every room and more besides! Living space was reputedly at a premium. His driving ambition to hold the most authoritative sound archive ultimately necessitated him leaving the UK and relocating in America. His archive developed new dynamics and the industrial-type unit he worked from became his second 'home'. He now had the space and potential to tackle the project unstintingly. ORCA maintained its valuable UK based support of the hobby with a marvellous library, informative newsletters and team undertaking the off air recording. Sadly, Barry passed away at the end of 2004 after a short illness. We as a society can remember with gratitude his enormous efforts in archive preservation. It also raises the all important question of what do we do with our own collections as and when we pass on. The Vintage Radio Preservation Collectors Circle is currently generating some concerns on this very subject. All too frequently, cherished collections go to land fill when a collector's effects are disposed of. Sound recordings are not immediately seen as desirable or cherishable artefacts by unsuspecting recipients. It is hoped that we can prevent any further loss of our audio history by setting up a service by which the material can be collected and held on to until it can be appropriately archived in the future. The Navy Lark Appreciation Society accepts all material from any source if it features cast members from the various Larks. We desperately need to upgrade some off air material and if you have a show you recorded off air do send in a copy. It might be just what we are looking for!

If you locate or record any material from the air waves, do keep our library in mind. It would be marvellous to have copies of adverts or appearances of cast members, and those of you with DVD capability - there is no excuse!

Huge thanks must go to Stephen Marshall who managed to capture a unique show broadcast by BBC7 just before Christmas. Dickie Henderson introduces his comedy favourites in "Laughter in the Air" which features *The Navy Lark* in the second half of the show. It's a marvellous programme and a copy is already in the library for your delectation.

Since the last issue, a huge number of MP3 shows have been placed on Ebay by different names. Some vendors are clearly hostile to those of us who work within copyright law and acknowledge our sources. Typically this past autumn one seller derided people who only purchased BBC products (see cutting)

Another seller stated the Navy Lark starred Bill Hodges as CPO Pertwee!

Join the illustrious crew of H.M.S. Troutbridge in their crazy naval exploits with Bill Hodges as the incomparable CPO Pertwee and Leslie Philips as Sub Lieutenant Philips.


OLD TIME RADIO - RADIO TAPED BY AMATEURS OVER 30 YEARS AGO AND NOW OUT OF PRODUCTION IS TRADED FREELY AS PUBLIC DOMAIN ACROSS THE WORLD.

THE BBC DON'T LIKE IT OF COURSE, IT MEANS THAT YOU CAN GET ABOUT 30 HOURS OF LOW BITRATE, MONO PURE NOSTALGIA ONTO ONE MP3CD FOR ABOUT A FIVER A CD, THIS MEANS YOU DON'T HAVE TO BUY IT FROM THEM, DIGITALLY REMASTERED AND ARTIFICIALLY STEREO'D UP FOR £10 FOR 2 SHOWS.

SOME OF THE BBC ONES HAVE BEEN LOST AND HAD TO BE REPLACED FROM OTR NEWSGROUPS... SO, WHERE ARE YOU GETTING YOURS FROM?

ALL OF THE STUFF ON THESE FANTASTIC COLLECTIONS OF OLD TIME RADIO HAVE BEEN DOWNLOADED FREE FROM NEWSGROUPS AND FAN SITES AT SOME TIME. YOU CAN DO THE SAME - OR YOU BID ON THIS COLLECTION,


Seller Information

avinalarff (21 ☆) 

Feedback Score: 21
Positive Feedback: 100%
Member since 31-Jan-04 in
United Kingdom

ebay.co.uk

redzed333 (1255 ☆)

Power Seller 

Feedback Score: 1255
Positive Feedback: 99.5%
Member since 17-Nov-02 in

Ted Kendall upgrades to CEDAR Cambridge and Retouch



CEDAR Cambridge



A long-time CEDAR owner, and the winner of numerous accolades and awards, Ted Kendall has upgraded his audio restoration facility to include a fully-loaded CEDAR Cambridge™ system and a SADiE PCM-8 workstation with Retouch™.

In just a month since the Cambridge system's installation, Kendall has already used it to restore radio shows such as The Goon Show, The Navy Lark and Beyond Our Ken for the BBC, as well as CD box sets of Cab Calloway, Django Reinhardt and Charlie Parker for John Steadman Promotions (JSP), plus numerous recordings for Memoire Records and Jazz Specialists Frog Records.

Ted Kendall has been slaving away on our behalf once again and a new box set of CDs will be out in early March 2005. This will be the awaited part 2 of series 2. Let's hope the BBC release all future series in single boxes from now on, otherwise we will still be waiting to get the last shows in 25 years time; and I probably won't be around to buy them!

Chris Butterfield has turned up two more good quality Embassy Lark shows; these will appear in our found shows listing in the next magazine. Copies will be arriving

here soon we hope.

Thanks to everyone who has written and forwarded cuttings and snippets from newspapers and magazines and tapes. Your efforts and enthusiasm are enormously helpful, and a big welcome to those of you receiving this Navy Days for the first time. We hope you enjoy the edition as much as we did putting it together!

According to the BBC website, the Hitchiker's Guide to the Galaxy listen again option has enjoyed over 1million listeners since September. That must put Leslie Phillips in one of the most popular broadcasting

links to date. He has also been asked to star in a movie called Domino. The film is to be shot in and around Batley North Yorkshire. He last filmed in the area in 1955 when Diana Dors was lead in (the romantic comedy) "Value for Money".

Finally we wish Amanda Murray **Good Luck** in her new home. Amanda has been very helpful of late and looked out a recording or two for us to review together with various pieces of ephemera from The Navy Lark days.

Navy Lark Appreciation Society Newsletter - Issue 18 Winter 2005

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My Life in Light Entertainment

Evelyn Wells



Evelyn in the studio recording the TV Lark in 1963

Although I worked for the BBC for over forty years, I joined more or less by default. I was nearing the end of a year's commercial course at Hendon Technical College (it's probably called a University now!) having left Grammar School at 16. I'd already written a letter to British European Airways asking about the possibility of a job with them and was awaiting a reply. In the meantime, I thought I'd add my name to the list of people who were to go for an interview with the BBC. They were going in a group and I'd nothing better to do on that particular afternoon!

The offer of a shorthand typist post with the Corporation came before I'd heard anything from BEA ... so I became a member of a small section called Programme Correspondence, which dealt with all kinds of comments and queries from listeners. It gave me an extremely good insight into the BBC's radio output.

However, I was always (and still am) star-struck. My interest was really in the comedy and variety programmes where so many big names featured. I very soon learned that there were people called production secretaries who worked on these shows, and actually went to studios and met all the stars. That was what I wanted to do and after about two and a half years in Programme Correspondence I applied for a post in Variety Department (as Light Entertainment was then called), had an interview (or 'Board', as the Corporation calls them) and as a result became a junior secretary at Aeolian Hall in New Bond

Street where Variety Department was based - a nice ten minute walk away from Broadcasting House. I was put in

the office of senior producer Tom Ronald, who produced "Life with the Lyons" and many big variety shows. His secretary was excellent and throughout my days as a production secretary I'd bless Maureen for all she taught me. The first series I worked on on my own was called "Home at Eight" produced by a lovely man named Ronnie Hill, absolutely steeped in theatre. The show starred Hermione Gingold, Alfred Marks and Richard Attenborough (just plain 'Dickie' then) with Peter Yorke and his orchestra. Does anyone remember 'The Doom Family'? : 'Tea, Edmund - mil-uk?' Hermione was Drusilla, Alfred was Edmund and Dickie was their son. The butler Trog was played by FX man Phil Hicks, known for ages after as Trog Hicks - all one ever heard were heavy slow footsteps, and listeners could only imagine what this creature looked like! It was on this show I first met Lawrie Wyman later to become the Navy Lark Writer.

A year or two later I worked with Dickie Attenborough again and his wife Sheila Sim. For the life of me I can't remember the title of the series, but it was light drama produced by Audrey Cameron, who later moved to Drama Department because that was really her forte.

Another series I worked on with her was "The Barlowes of Beddington", starring Patrick Barr and Pauline Jameson. It was about a boys' boarding school and I've recently discovered from reading his autobiography that I must have met Michael Crawford when he was 13! He writes that he appeared in the series playing one of the schoolboys - I'm afraid I don't remember him.

Variety/Light Entertainment Department covered quite a range of programmes: situation comedy, panel games and quizzes, film programmes, light drama, features (occasionally) and, of course, the topical programmes like "Week Ending" - which carried on for years, "The News Quiz" and "News Huddlines".

In the past we've had the sort of comedy programmes which now come under the heading "Golden Oldies": "ITMA", "Educating Archie", "Take It From Here", "Round the Home", "Ray's A Laugh", "The Goon Show", "Hancock's Half Hour" and "The Navy Lark".

I was involved at some time or another on all of the last four. I've worked on just about every sort of Light Entertainment show from big spectacles through situation comedies and magazine programmes to quizzes and panel games - some live but most recorded.

I was very lucky in that the majority of my time in Light Entertainment was spent working for only two producers: Alastair Scott Johnston for 12 years, and John Dyas for 13, but there were others for shorter periods of time - like George Inns who produced "Ray's A Laugh".

George was a quiet likeable man, but at that particular time what interested me more than anything was working on "Ray's A Laugh". It was my first top ranking show which was all very exciting, and it was live - just before the nine o'clock news on a Thursday evening. It was on that show I first met Patricia Hayes, Kenneth Connor (who used to call me 'Little Evie') an up and coming young man called Peter Sellers and, of course, Ted Ray. I always liked Ted, but he had a reputation for being mean, so it surprised George at Christmas when Ted gave me a present of rather expensive perfume.

George left Radio Light Entertainment and went to Television where he created "The Black and White Minstrel Show", and produced it for many years.

There was Peter Eton, producer of "The Goon Show". He had a reputation for being extremely difficult to work for and at one time was without a secretary as one had just left and a replacement had not yet been found. No-one in the Department had applied for the job because of his reputation, and someone from elsewhere was due to arrive eventually. I was 'floating' just then - not with any specific producer - so I was given to Peter for a couple of months. I wasn't any too happy about it but duly turned up in his office on Monday morning, trying not to look apprehensive. In fact we worked very well together and after about a month Peter asked me why I hadn't applied for the post of his secretary as he would have been quite happy with me. I had to tell him the truth, that at the time I didn't think I wanted to work for him - a bit embarrassing but he thought it was funny, particularly when I said, "Now I wish I had applied". However, it was far too late then, as the closing date for applications was long past. Actually I very much enjoyed my time with him and my short stint on "The Goon Show". Also I was very popular with my friends. Sunday evenings at the Camden Theatre where the show was recorded were a sort of Mecca and I, of course, could get tickets.

Then there was Dennis Main Wilson who produced "Hancock's Half Hour". Like many others, I loved that programme and was delighted to have the opportunity of working on it and meeting Tony Hancock, Kenneth Williams, Hattie Jacques, Sid James and Bill Kerr and the writers Ray Galton and Alan Simpson.

Tony Hancock was a strange man: when everyone else went to have a cup of coffee during a break, he would sit all by himself in a corner of the stalls - and, of course, he had an alcohol problem.

Dennis was a nervy, enthusiastic man who usually wore his tie twisted round under one ear, and would rush into the office each morning demanding coffee and doughnuts, but he was a very good producer. He had an unerring eye and ear for the way a script would play and he steered "Hancock's Half Hour" to tremendous success, and I would say that quite a lot of Galton and Simpson's success is attributable to Dennis's early guidance.

He too left radio to go to Television and wanted me to go with him, but TV would not allow a new secretary to work for a new producer (fair enough really when one considers how complicated TV shows are), so as far as I was concerned, that was the end of it. Dennis created and produced that very popular long-running series "Till Death Us Do Part".

I stayed in radio and became Alastair Scott Johnston's secretary and as I've said, I remained with him for 12 years. He was a slightly pedantic, pipe smoking, ex-public school man who rarely got worked up over anything. I can remember him losing his temper only once and that was with a studio manager who, throughout an entire 30 minute rehearsal of "The Navy Lark", didn't get one taped effect or music link right! Alastair was a very versatile producer who could turn his hand to almost any type of programme. He'd been a studio manager himself so knew the technicalities of radio and what one could do with it. He was very good at scripted comedy, his casting was always excellent, and he was a good director in the studio.

John Dyas, too, had been a studio manager and had the ability to make all types of programmes. He also was a very good producer and a perfectionist. But he couldn't have been more different from Alastair. He was gay - but didn't flaunt the fact, highly strung, and at times very short tempered. I used to swear there was a dent in the control room ceiling at the Paris Studio where he'd blown up some luckless studio manager. He was witty, very intelligent, had a needle-sharp mind - and one had to be on one's toes every moment he was around. One day he came bursting into the office in a rush, as always, and said "Drop everything" - to which my response was, "What - here?"

All of which should tell you that a production secretary had to be a very flexible person to work happily with all types. If there was a personality clash it was pretty disastrous. When I was in Light Entertainment, the producer and PA spent so many hours together, much of it in a small office and sometimes under considerable pressure, that if they disliked each other the relationship was unworkable.

A good PA is her producer's right hand. Let me just tell you a short anecdote to show you what I mean. When I was John's secretary there was an occasion when - as most producers do at the end of an audience show - he went up on stage to thank all the cast and the studio managers for their work on the programme, but he didn't thank me. I was used to this so it didn't bother me but a mutual friend of John and myself who'd been in the audience took him to task in the pub after the show and asked him why he hadn't thanked me - and what's more never did. When telling me about the conversation later, she said he looked slightly taken aback, then said, "But it didn't occur to me. Evelyn's my other half and I don't thank myself." That, when you come to think of it, is a tremendous compliment. And Alastair Scott Johnston said much the same thing in different words: he described an ideal relationship between producer and production secretary as 'a daytime marriage'.

The producer is, or should be, the one with the ideas, and the knowledge and ability to bring those ideas to fruition. The secretary/PA is the one with the secretarial skills and organisational ability to ensure that everyone concerned in the making of the programme arrives in the right studio at the right time on the right day, and with the right script. In addition, she must be able to deal with, and be at ease with, all sorts of different people both inside and outside the Corporation - from commissionaires and canteen staff to star actors and musicians.

It helps too, to know where to go for information - for instance: how long does it take for a body to decompose in a locked cupboard? which was something I was once requested to find out. Reference Library - who were marvellous - came up with the answer which I'm afraid I can't now remember. They'd rung Guy's Hospital. During the time I was working for John Dyas he produced three series of the radio adaptations of "Dad's Army" and for one programme we had to find out how much a cup of coffee cost in 1943. I rang Cadburys/Lyons who were most helpful when I told them why I wanted to know.

The PA must have a pleasant telephone manner (a lot of time is spent on the phone), and remember that while talking to people outside the Corporation she's representing the BBC. She needs a sense of humour, must be able to work under pressure and on her own initiative - and preferably be able to read the producer's mind!!! One thing she must not have is a 9 to 5 mentality because it's one hundred per cent certain that she will have to work all sorts

of odd hours, often at weekends and sometimes in the evening and through lunch breaks. And one more thing is absolutely essential - the ability and willingness to carry trays of coffee from canteen to studio. I have come across PAs who seem to think it beneath them, but my answer to that was if Vincent Price could do it, why shouldn't they? It's perfectly true that Vincent used to go and get coffee for everyone. When John and I were working with him on three or four series of horror plays called "Price of Fear", Vincent was nearly always first in the studio and very often the rest of us would arrive to find a tray of coffee waiting.

Meeting all sorts of people in show business was something I loved. Most of my friends in radio are/were just the same - I suppose we're all a bit star-struck, and it's one of the things that made the job fun. Over the years I've met and/or worked with an enormous number of well known people: John Mills, Coral Browne, Maggie Smith, Diana Dors, Margaret Lockwood, James Robertson Justice, Val Doonican, Martin Jarvis, Simon Brett, Andy Hamilton, Stephen Fry, Griff Rhys Jones, Frank Thornton, and, of course, many of the big names in the variety world: Arthur Askey, Max Bygraves, Ronnie Barker, Leslie Crowther, June Whitfield, Roy Hudd, Barry Took, Tommy Trinder, Nicholas Parsons, Joan Sims, Terry Scott, Hinge and Bracket - so many of them. Most I liked ... Arthur Askey was naturally a very funny man and he was the only comedian I ever saw who managed to make a BBC House Orchestra laugh at rehearsal. They were on the whole a fairly **hard bitten** bunch, like most musicians. It took a lot to make them laugh, especially at 10.30 in the morning but Arthur did it. He had them and the George Mitchell Choir falling about laughing - quite an achievement.

Roy Hudd everybody likes, as they did Harry Secombe. You never hear anyone say a bad word about either of them. A light really did go out of the world when Harry died. Working with Hinge and Bracket (George Logan and Patrick Fyffe) was strange in a way. I think they were brilliant (Patrick of course died a while ago). What was strange was seeing them in men's clothes during rehearsal and calling them George and Patrick yet, once they were in costume, not even thinking of them as anything but Dr. Evadne and Dame Hilda. When they were in costume they **were** Dr. Evadne and Dame Hilda and never never stepped out of character.

Ted Ray, as I said previously, I liked very much when I first met him and continued to do so over the years. I admired him tremendously; his memory for gags was phenomenal - it seemed to work like a computer. Whatever subject was mentioned, Ted could immediately find a joke about it - and his timing was superb.

When I worked for Alastair we had a very long running series called 'Variety Playhouse', **compered and conducted** by Vic Oliver. I don't know whether anyone remembers it. It was broadcast on a Saturday evening on the Home Service and was a bit of an odd mixture of orchestral and operatic music, comedy and a weekly ten-minute drama sketch from Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge; it was very popular. It was in that show I first met June Whitfield, Leslie Crowther and Ronnie Barker and during that time met many people from the classical music field as well as those in variety. Incidentally, we also made a series called "Just Perfick" - a radio version of "The Darling Buds of May" with Bernard

Miles as Pa and Betty Marsden as Ma Larkin.

When it came to being John Dyas's PA, once again there were all sorts of different shows, film programmes, panel games, musical documentaries, light drama and situation comedies such as the radio adaptations of "Dad's Army" and "All Gas and Gaiters" - from that show I remember particularly William Mervyn (The Bishop) who was a delightful man. We worked with, amongst others, Michael Jayston, Annette Crosbie, Tony Britton, Edward Woodward (a number of times), Robert Hardy, and, as I've already mentioned, Vincent Price. Apart from the series "Price of Fear" (mainly for World Service), we also worked with him on a serial called "Aliens in the Mind" when his co-star was Peter Cushing. That was quite something, working with two of the film world's greatest horror merchants - and it would have been difficult to find two more charming gentlemen.



Photo shoot aboard HMS Chrysanthemum

But of all the programmes I worked on over the years, my favourite series always remained "The Navy Lark" which was Alastair Scott Johnston's pride and joy. Written by Lawrie Wyman, it had a lovely cast led by Jon Pertwee, Leslie Phillips and - in the first series - Dennis Price; after that, Stephen Murray. Also in the cast were Michael Bates, Tenniel Evans, Ronnie Barker, Heather Chasen, Richard Caldicot and, later on, Judy Cornwell. Very few of them knew each other well before the programme started but they all became friends as well as working companions. It was a very successful and happy show. Starting a new series was like going back to school after the holidays - lovely to meet all one's friends again. And the Navy was always very helpful when Lawrie Wyman had queries about anything. Also HMS Troubridge, the real frigate after which HMS Troutbridge was named, felt themselves one up on the rest of the fleet! Once we all attended a recommissioning of Troubridge at Portsmouth and when the whole crew sang 'Oh hear us when we cry to thee, For those in peril on the sea', suddenly it meant a whole lot more than when singing it in church.

Anyway, "The Navy Lark" originated when writer Lawrie Wyman came to Alastair Scott Johnston with the synopsis for a situation comedy set in the Navy. Alastair thought it had distinct possibilities so, after a certain amount of alteration and rewriting it was sent to the Head of Light Entertainment who liked it and sent it on to Controller of Radio 2 (or, as it was then, Light Programme). He also liked the synopsis and back it came with permission for a trial script. Up to this point Lawrie Wyman hadn't been paid at all because he'd brought the synopsis in 'on spec'.

Now he could be commissioned to write a 30 minute pilot and be paid for it. When this was written, and amended and approved by Alastair, it too was sent to the Head of Department who passed it on to Light Programme with a recommendation that we should be allowed a pilot recording. That permission was given and the programme was a success right from the start. Everyone connected with it had tremendous confidence in a very funny script: we had managed to book all the cast Alastair wanted and they all worked well together; the studio audience for the pilot show loved it; the powers that be liked it and we were commissioned for a series of 13 programmes. "The Navy Lark" became hugely popular and ran for many series. It's very rewarding and great fun to be part of a team involved with a popular show like that. Audience Research tells us of the popularity or otherwise of a programme but if it's an audience show there are two even better ways of judging if it's a hit: one is when the studio is packed for every recording and the other - probably most foolproof of all - is when you see members of the department there bringing their friends and relatives! "The Navy Lark" nearly always had Light Entertainment people in the audience, as did "Beyond Our Ken", "I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again" and "News Huddlines"

Recording was always on a Sunday and the cast used to have a copy of the script beforehand so script day was Thursday - sometimes morning, usually afternoon but sometimes only part in the afternoon. One week I'd typed about half of it on Thursday evening and on Friday morning rang Lawrie Wyman to ask when he'd be coming in with the rest of it. The conversation went like this: Me: "Morning, guess who?" Lawrie: "Morning, guess what?"



Taking a break during the publicity shoot

I replied, "I see" and put the phone down. . . which was shorthand for: Lawrie hadn't finished, wasn't likely to be coming in to the office and in all probability I'd have to do what I'd done on a number of previous occasions - type the rest of the script straight from his dictation over the phone. One Christmas Lawrie actually had the cheek to buy me a shoulder rest for the phone to make it easier for me to take dictation and type at the same time! He did give me something else as well, I hasten to add.

Generally, if a script is ready in time, cast and Studio Managers each have a copy in advance; otherwise it's not seen by them until rehearsal - but if there are any really difficult effects the SMs can be warned by phone. Once everything is ready for the studio, the PA packs the programme boxes - these are essential. In them go scripts, tapes & discs required for the show, stopwatch (sometimes two), typing paper, variously coloured pens and pencils, paper clips, scissors - in fact anything that might be useful in the studio. I even used to take aspirin and Band-aid. . . you name it, I packed it!



TV Lark photo opportunity during a recording

On arrival in the studio, almost invariably the first priority is - coffee! I really don't think BBC Radio would function without coffee! After that, studio routines vary from one type of programme to another, of course. A quiz show or panel game can't have a proper run-through - just a sort of dummy run to give the guests an idea of what goes on and allow the voices to be balanced. Then the audience comes in and you're all set to go.

On a non-audience show it's usually easiest to use the rehearse/record technique; then you can record scenes, sketches or music while it's still fresh in everybody's minds. Even then, on a scripted show, the first thing is a read-through.

And that is always first on a scripted audience show, which was what I was mostly involved with. Everyone just sits and reads the script - not on mic. There are a lot of stops, starts, suggestions, possible cuts, production notes, etc and throughout the PA has to time the script and make a note of every amendment, cut and change of cue. On "The Navy Lark", right from the start each member of the cast plus Alastair and I always sat in "our own" seats. The places never changed whether we were in The Playhouse or The Paris. And forever afterwards I always sat in "my place" whatever show I worked on.

While this is going on, the studio managers are busy in the control room with other things. On many Light Entertainment shows there are three studio managers: one on the panel, in charge of all the faders - in other words the one who makes the eventual mix and balance you hear on the air. He - or she - is technically in charge of the studio and makes the decisions on where all the microphones should be. Then there's the SM who looks after the tape and disc effects, and the 'spot' SM - the one who opens doors, stirs tea, pours water, rattles crockery - in fact, who makes the noises 'on the spot'. If there's music in the show that's rehearsed while the panel SM gets the balance right. After the read-through, the PA gives the SMs and music director (if there is one) all the script amendments before the run-through. This is a complete run on mic. of the whole show with music and effects, with an accurate timing by the PA of absolutely everything. Then more production

notes, possibly extra rehearsal for any difficult bits of the programme, final amendments and cuts if necessary. Most producers of recorded comedy shows like to have them a bit long so that if something doesn't 'go' too well (the audience doesn't think it's funny), it can be cut before transmission.



Between shows the cast and producer find time to exchange anecdotes

The announcer arrives, runs through the opening and closing - probably over the signature tune, the studio is cleared and it's time for the audience to come in. Once they're settled and it's coming up to recording time, the producer goes on stage, introduces the cast, maybe does a short 'warm up' or asks one of the cast to do it, finally introduces 'a real live BBC announcer' and returns to the control cubicle. The red light goes on and recording starts. During the recording, the PA keeps an accurate timing of everything - including any fluffs and retakes or even extra-long applause and laughter which could eventually be cut, makes notes of ad-libs - anything which could be of help to the producer when editing. John always used my script when editing - never his own. And when the show's finished and the audience gone, it's 'everyone round to the pub'

Once the programme is recorded it has to be edited and that, of course, is the producer's responsibility, although I have, sometimes in an emergency, made the decisions.

It was an interesting life in Light Entertainment because no two series were the same and no two days were exactly the same. It was a fascinating job and I know how lucky I am to have had one I enjoyed so much. One of the great things about it was the extraordinarily wide output of the Department, so one was rarely bored. Of course there were some programmes that weren't particularly successful or happy and some I didn't much care for but even with a series you don't like you know it'll come to an end. All right, there might be another and you might get landed with it again but you can think about that if it happens and in the meantime there's likely to be something much more pleasant. There isn't the feeling of having to do the same thing day after day, week after week, and month after monotonous month.

The wide variety of its programmes still remained even in later years when Light Ent. became much smaller than it used to be. Quite a long time ago it was split into two with the producers who made mainly the spoken word shows being left in Light Ent. and those who concentrated on music programmes becoming Popular Music Department, but at that time we all stayed together in the same building: Aeolian Hall in New Bond Street which the BBC had leased since 1943. It was a very friendly and happy place to be and no-one who worked there will ever forget it. We look back on Aeolian with nostalgia and great affection. There weren't

just offices there, we had two studios, editing channels, music library and our own staff restaurant. We had our own commissionaires too and they, together with the canteen and post room staff and messengers, were as much part of the Department as anyone else.

Eventually the lease ran out; it was too expensive to renew and we had to move away - and what's more, be split up.....a very sad day. That building held so much radio history and so many memories. But 5 years later Colin Chandler, a producer in Popular Music, thought it would be a good idea to have a reunion for everybody who'd ever worked in Aeolian. Obviously there was no trouble in tracing people still in London and working for the BBC, or those who'd retired, but he also managed to contact many who'd moved away to other regions, and many more who'd left the BBC altogether. Colin booked the Concert Hall(now the Radio Theatre) in Broadcasting House for the reunion - it's very large and that evening it was packed. People had come from all over the country and it was marvellous to meet current and ex-members of the BBC one hadn't seen for years. Everyone had an absolutely wonderful evening and it epitomised the sort of camaraderie that existed in Light Entertainment. To an outsider, the Department might seem relaxed and casual but in fact there's a great deal of very strict self-discipline because deadlines and a stopwatch rule one's life.

Finally, and just to show what programmes and people who worked in and on them meant to us all in Light Entertainment - a few years ago a show was recorded at The Paris in Lower Regent Street. Those taking part were all artists who had worked in that studio over the years, and the audience was made up of current and retired staff who had spent many many hours there making the programmes. It was wonderful to meet so many old friends, but was also incredibly sad because it was the final programme ever to be recorded there.

The studio manager on the panel on that last occasion was a man I knew well and with whom I'd worked a great deal. He'd spent hundreds of hours in The Paris making all sorts of programmes with so many different producers and artists. Now this was the last time he'd work there - it was the end of an era for him and for all of us. We all understood so well why he was in tears.



Aboard HMS Chrysanthemum alternatively HMS Troutbridge for a day!

The TV Lark

After four Seasons of The Navy Lark, the Controller of the Light Programme felt that the sit-com had probably had a long enough run. Lawrie had written 88 episodes and the Controller appears to have judged that the audience figures would soon wane. To avoid the show becoming stale, he considered alternative situations for the cast. The Whitehall Lark is rumoured to have been a possible development idea but it never reached the microphone. However, at the end of 1962 'The Men From The Ministry' appeared on the Light Programme, curiously the Navy Lark alternative aired just 6 weeks later in January 1963.

The idea selected for the ensemble was The TV Lark. The Controller of the Light Programme presented the concept to Lawrie and Alastair as a fait accompli. Despite their strongly voiced concerns. The Navy Lark's production team had no option but to buckle down, generate the scripts and get the show on air. The format of the new show stretched listeners' credulity from the very beginning. Television in 1963 came in just 2 flavours: BBC and ITV. Both companies appreciated the value of local news, which serviced national schedules at fixed points in the day. Troutbridge TV was meant to be a small independent television company, presumably on the South Coast, set up to provide local interest material for the national Independent Television Authority.

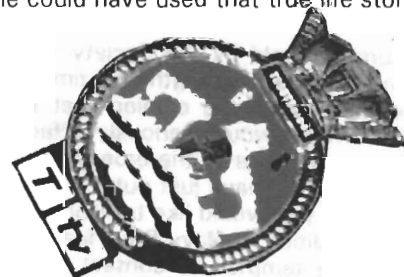


Clockwise:
Richard Caldicot Stephen Murray Michael Bates Robin Boyle
Leslie Phillips Tenniel Evans Janet Brown Ronnie Barker Jon Pertwee

Listeners were required to believe that personnel from a single Royal Naval ship could be returned to civilian life, find their way to a fledgling television company and be employed as a station's technical crew to make and broadcast television shows despite having no appropriate experience. The series ran for just 10 weeks. It failed to capture the nation's affection and after just 4 episodes Lawrie started to incorporate nautical themes back into the plot in an attempt to broaden the comedic opportunities, restore breadth to his characters and re-introduce a wider range of personalities missing from the TTV studio setting. The TV Lark was only broadcast once on UK air waves - which was unusual as all previous Navy Larks enjoyed a substantial repeat schedule. Lawrie quickly returned the crew to HMS Troutbridge in week 10, where they stayed for the next 13 years.

Alastair Scott Johnston and Lawrie Wyman were astute enough to appreciate that a studio based format, despite the option of a little location work, was no substitute for misdemeanours and incompetence on the high seas by jolly jack tar. Troutbridge could sail the seas and find new adventures every week. A spell in any wardrobe could provide enough material to keep Laurie writing for months. I recently learned that the construction of a new warship in the 1980s by a UK shipyard proved somewhat taxing when the two halves of the vessel being manufactured separately within the yard were brought together for final assembly. Despite working from identical plans, the ship's fore and aft hulls were 24 inches bigger across the beam on one section than on the other. This required a great deal of use of rams to squeeze and stretch the hulls to line up. Imagine how Lawrie could have used that true life story!

The Troutbridge emblem went through minor surgery before it re-emerged as the station 'ident'. The familiar legend "Evr'ybody Down!" disappears, and a capital "T" is added to the tv abstracted from the current BBC TV graphic of 1963.



The Ttv Characters:

Lawrie Wyman probably had few options when it came to using his ensemble. He had already created memorable characters with recognisable traits which enjoyed wide popularity with the listening public. Alastair Scott Johnston presumably had issued contracts to the ensemble as the show changed direction. Heather Chasen was not available for the series and this meant Janet Brown became the multi voiced female actor - even talking to herself on one occasion.

Station staff at Troutbridge TV are kept in the same hierarchical order in order to preserve a degree of continuity between the two shows.



Richard Caldicot is the Deputy Controller of the station. He is responsible for programmes, budget and day to day running of the building and its staff. His persona and nickname (Thunderguts) remain the same. Seemingly in control but always the victim of his staff's incompetence and mishaps, he constantly walks the tightrope between the company's senior management, the accountants and the production staff.

Stephen Murray takes on the responsibility of producer, a position which requires effective management skills, awareness of staff capabilities and a sense of purpose. What he cannot do is produce a programme single handedly; inevitably he must rely on subordinates to meet his expectations.



Leslie Phillips is the Director, a role for which he is desperately unsuited. The position requires immense organisational skills; he must deliver a project on time by directing his working team, coordinating relevant resources both human and mechanical, and factoring the unexpected into the working schedule in order to minimise waste and under achievement as well as delivering programme content live to the network.

Jon Pertwee finds himself as floor manager. Once again he must organise equipment, arrange transport, hire specialist services and ensure that location filming is undertaken with a minimum of nuisance to all concerned and come in on budget.



Robin Boyle is woven into the show more obviously in this series as he becomes the anchor voice for **T tv**



Ronnie Barker, Tenniel Evans, Michael Bates and Janet Brown generate all the other marvellous characters which occasionally re-visit personas encountered in *The Navy Lark* but are given a different name for this outing.

The shows currently held by the Society vary in length from 27 minutes to 30 minutes. The usual explanation for shows to run for different lengths of time is that the Transcription Service would edit recordings to around 28 minutes. The NLAS is of the opinion that the material currently held is off air and frequently minus opening and closing credits, which would seriously affect the running time of the programme. Show 9 is missing from the archive. Various recordings of the broadcasts do turn up from time to time on tape and on MP3. However, episode 9 has yet to reappear. We have just put the whole series (without any attempt to re-master) on to audio CD, not MP3, for the library, so if you would like to hear this material, contact Iden and have a listen.

The cover to this edition of *Navy Days* features a fictitious version of the Radio Times. Many of you who collect radio ephemera might be tempted to contact your usual warehouse in order to locate a copy. It doesn't exist! On this occasion we have taken the liberty of using a 1956 Victor Reinganum cover for *The Radio Show* and have modified it somewhat!

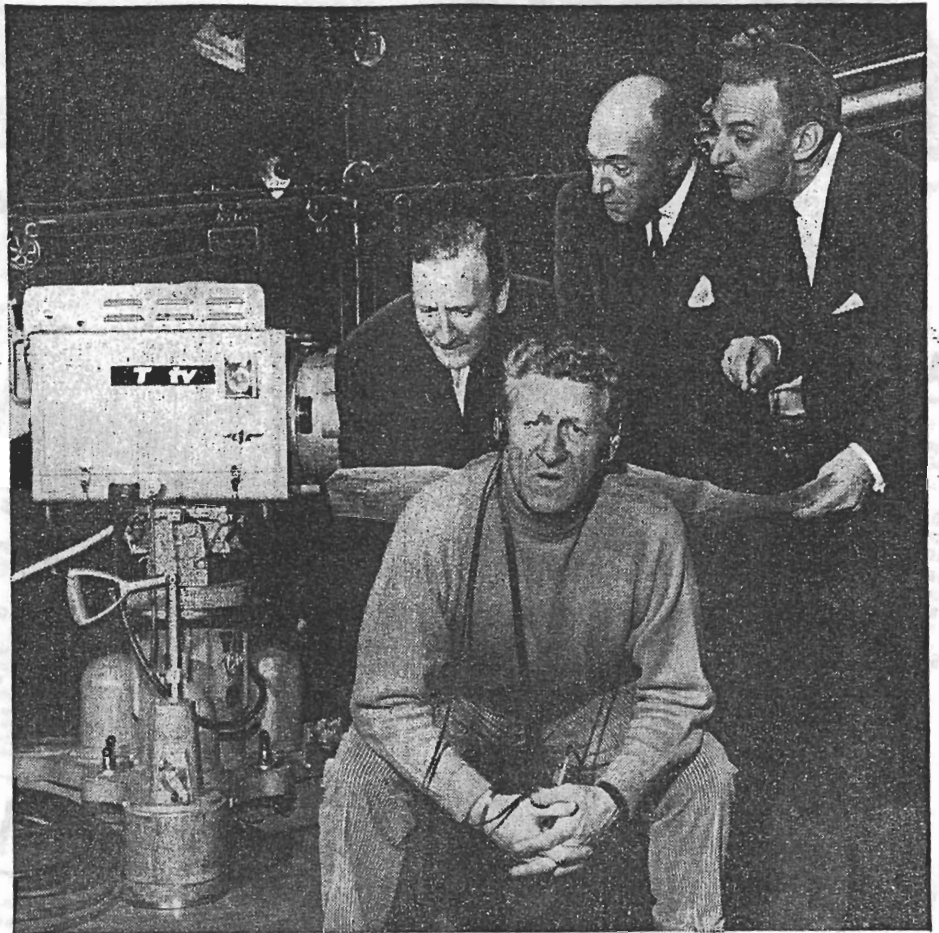
The TV Lark

25.01.1963	1	Opening Night	30.48	NLAS 20B
01.02.1963	2	The Prestige Show	30.25	NLAS 21A
08.02.1963	3	Z Ambulances	27.44	B
15.02.1963	4	The Westminster Interview	29.51	NLAS 22A
22.02.1963	5	The Governor Returns	28.36	B
01.03.1963	6	On Safari	28.08	NLAS 23A
08.03.1963	7	Ship Ahoy!	28.09	B
15.03.1963	8	The Portarneyland Election	30.15	NLAS 24A
29.03.1963	10	Back in the Navy	29.37	B

LAWRIE WYMAN
introduces his
new comedy series
beginning in the
Light Programme tonight

THE TV LARK

in which the former
shipmates of
THE NAVY LARK
embark on a
new enterprise ashore,
Troutbridge Television Ltd.



From the left: Leslie Phillips, Jon Pertwee, Richard Caldicot, Stephen Murray



LIGHT
8.0

YES, I do realise it's terribly confusing but nevertheless *The TV Lark* is a SOUND RADIO PROGRAMME. It was thought that we should make this clear from the start. Particularly, after a completely hysterical conversation I had with my milkman recently, when he asked me what had happened to *The Navy Lark*. I told him it was now to be *The TV Lark* and he said, 'Oh you're all going on telly, then?' I pointed out that we weren't going to be on telly, we were going to be *about* telly—and that was the beginning of an utterly useless thirty-minute chat which left us both baffled. He also forgot to leave the milk.

Basically, tonight you will meet the 'Lark' crew all set to start their new occupation—the task of running the Troutbridge Commercial Television station, otherwise known as T-tv. This serves the inhabitants of Troutbridgeshire, and anyone else who is misguided enough to buy the desperately big aerial which is vitally necessary to pick up T-tv's pathetically weak signal. This signal is just one of the worries that concern the Deputy Controller of T-tv programmes, ex-Captain, now Mister, Henry Povey. Not that he can complain—but for him, we should still be in *The Navy Lark*.

It seems that since the last programme the gallant Captain has finally managed to put the skids under Lieutenant Murray, Sub-Lieutenant Phillips, Chief Petty Officer Pertwee, and the rest of the crew of H.M.S. *Troutbridge*. He finally convinced their Lordships at Admiralty that the entire ship's company was redundant. Unfortunately he did this so effectively that he convinced them that he was redundant as well. Life is like that.

Another of his worries is that the staff of T-tv miraculously turns out to be somewhat familiar. The Producer seems to be Mister Stephen Murray, the Director is Mister Leslie Phillips, and what is known as the Floor Manager is a certain Mister Jon Pertwee. This latter post may require a little explanation. The Floor Manager is the dogsbody in the studio who cops the Producer's directions and bad language through a set of headphones and, if he's smart, acts on both. Not the job for a Pertwee you might think, but T-tv being a very small organisation it expects its Floor

Manager to undertake responsibility for the wardrobe and the property department as well. As you can't get at one without the other, Pertwee accepted the job of Floor Manager with alacrity—to the cost of everyone except himself.

The design department is in the incapable hands of Mister Bates who has just submitted some sketches for the first night which are quite breathtaking. At least they would be if only one could find a gap where you could get a camera into the set to have a look at them. The gap would have to be reasonably large, of course, as the cameraman is Pertwee's old side-kick, ex-Able Seaman Johnson, affectionately known as Fatso. Listeners will be relieved to know that even if he has lost his rank he certainly hasn't lost his weight. Just to show that no expense has been spared T-tv has a second camera and reluctantly in charge of that, although he won't sign for it, is ex-Leading Seaman Taffy Goldstein, the well-known shop steward with legal connections.

All in all, one can see that the Deputy Controller (who is now concerned with ratings of a different sort) has more than enough to panic about. With a production crew such as this it would seem likely that Troutbridge Television is doomed to founder or end up on the rocks as frequently as H.M.S. *Troutbridge* did in the past.

As to the fate of H.M.S. *Troutbridge* herself—this is a grim story. Sub-Lieutenant Phillips's last attempt at navigating Portsmouth's dockyard entrance resulted in a complete write-off, and what's left of her may now be purchased piecemeal from the yard of a certain Messrs. Steptoe and Son. An Admiralty enquiry into the matter revealed nothing, since the relevant pages from the ship's log were unaccountably missing; and now the Senior Service will resume normally.

Tonight, then, Alastair Scott Johnston (for my milkman's benefit, Mr. Scott Johnston is our sound radio producer) and myself—and we hope you too—eagerly look forward to the first episode of *The TV Lark* which will take you behind the scenes for the grand opening of Troutbridge Television—in the Light Programme!

25.01.1963

TLO 1631

Episode 1

"Opening Night"

Mr Murray, The Producer.....
Mr Phillips, The Director.....
Vera, Mr Povey's TTV Secretary
Janet, Studio PA
Glad, Lady Mayoress
Announcer
French TV Presenter
Gervais Batsford-Shaw,
Controller of Programmes
Charlie - Train Driver
BBC Announcer
1st Potameylander
Mr Povey, (Thunderguts) Deputy Controller.....
Mr Pertwee, The Floor Manager.....
Fatso Johnson, First Cameraman
2nd Potameylander
Taffy Goldstein, Second Cameraman
Mayor
American
TTV announcer.....

Stephen Murray
Leslie Phillips

} Janet Brown

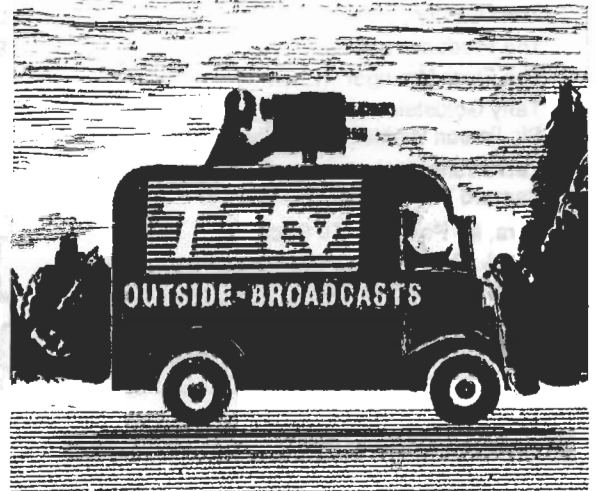
} Michael Bates

Richard Caldicot
Jon Pertwee

} Ronnie Barker

} Tenniel Evans

Robin Boyle



Written by: Lawrie Wyman

Produced by: Alastair Scott Johnston

Introduced: Stephen Murray, Jon Pertwee, Leslie Phillips

Concludes: Stephen Murray, Jon Pertwee, Leslie Phillips
"Trying Their Hand"

'For all those listeners who have demanded to know what happened to the Navy Lark crew, the time has come for us to 'fearlessly reveal all', - as they say in "Compact". Well, thrown out of one service, they've joined another: the newly formed Troutbridge Television Service. A top level meeting about the plans for their opening night is at present taking place between the Controller of Programmes T-TV Mr Gervaise Batsford-Shaw and the Deputy Controller - a certain Mister Henry Povey, ex Captain Royal Navy, retired - in his office at the Troutbridge Television studios.'

A meeting is taking place between Mr Povey and a senior Troutbridge TV executive. It becomes evident that ex captain Henry Povey, Royal Navy retired, has the new responsibility of creating the broadcast schedules for the about-to-be-launched Troutbridge TV.

A knock is heard on the office door and two familiar faces appear: Mr Murray has been awarded the post of Producer and Mr Phillips is given the job of Director. Dismay fills Mr Povey's thoughts when the newly appointed floor manager Mr Pertwee arrives for duty.

The gathered party try to determine how they ALL ended up working for Troutbridge TV after leaving the Navy. A consensus view is that a recently retired ex Rear Admiral who was given a senior post at the BBC had deliberately engineered it by giving them all superlative references which meant they were snapped up by the inexperienced board at Troutbridge TV; this had the desired effect of keeping their incompetence well away from everyone at the BBC.

Mr Povey determined that the decommissioning of a much loved steam railway service at Twigley Minor Halt would make an excellent news item for the team to deliver to air by providing a good introduction to these inexperienced would be media men as well as teaching them how to use the outside broadcasting van along with its editing equipment.

As the final words of the farewell speeches are made at the station, a tracking shot of the engine on its final journey is required. Mr Phillips at the steering wheel misses the adjacent track which runs parallel to railway and puts the van and its equipment onto the rails with disastrous consequences when it collides with a locomotive. The now immovable vehicle still has the telecine material of the event the outside broadcasting unit was covering, which was due to be taken back to the main studio for broadcasting. A revised plan is put into action which requires Fatso Johnson to use the outside broadcast van's editing suite and the local GPO telephone line to patch together incoming material and their recorded highlights before forwarding an edited show back to Troutbridge TV.

The consequences are dire as incompetence and frustration build. In desperation Fatso Johnson routes ALL signals through to Mr Murray, the producer; this action results in the equipment and van exploding. Pertwee tries to lessen the impact of the day's events by salvaging the residue of the van and equipment and delivering it back to Troutbridge TV, the unfortunate consequence of achieving this goal being that Troutbridge TV ends up buying the featured steam engine to deliver the scrap back to the studio.

01.02.1963

TLO 2284

Episode 2 "The Prestige Show"

Henry Povey.....
The Director.....
The Producer.....
The Floor Manager.....
Taffy Goldstein
Sir Jimson Whittaker Smythe MP
Fatso Johnson
Bernard Yeast
Vera, Mr Povey's TTV Secretary
Janet, Studio PA
Lady Whittaker Smythe
Gervais Batsford-Shaw
Puddie Flakes [voice over for commercial]
TTV announcer.....

Richard Caldicot
Leslie Phillips
Stephen Murray
Jon Pertwee

} Tenniel Evans

} Ronnie Barker

} Janet Brown

} Michael Bates
Robin Boyle



Written by: Lawrie Wyman

Produced by: Alastair Scott Johnston

Introduction : no details available
(JP LP SM ?)

Concludes: "Doing An Unfortunate"

'Last week the Troutbridge Television Service was officially launched and thanks to the production team under Mr. Murray, very nearly sunk as well. T-TV's Deputy Controller of Programmes and Sales Manager, poor old Henry Povey, has now recovered sufficiently from the shock to speak, and the people he most wishes to speak to in his office are that production team.'

"The fact remains, gentlemen, that so far nobody has bought a single solitary second of advertising time on T-TV"

Troutbridge TV is a commercial channel. The running costs of the station must be met by advertising. Mr Povey is seriously concerned that poor revenue from the advertisers is going to make their viability more unstable. Pertwee's deal with a local grocery shop failed to result in a cash injection for the station but a substantial quantity of Romanian baked beans in brine had, however, been in evidence around the building.

A review meeting with Messrs Povey, Phillips and Pertwee examines the type of programming more likely to render Troutbridge TV networked with other ITA stations and thus attract larger audiences. The controller of Troutbridge TV and Mr Povey formulate a proposal to create an in-depth talk show which would invite high profile guests into the TTV studio for thought provoking discussions. The decision is made that future Troutbridge schedules will include this series, entitled "Head On Challenge".

It is common practice for studios to have a hospitality room for guests to relax in prior to their appearance on set. Pertwee had been given responsibility for providing refreshments to a specific budget. Unfortunately he felt duty bound to test the contents of the various deliveries to ensure that the contents were acceptable and he emerges somewhat intoxicated, as does the show's first guest Smythe, a person with an apparent infinite capacity for alcohol. He arrives on set to be greeted by the show's anchorman Bernard Yeast, who delivers with inexorable detail and fluency a damning appraisal of Smythe's private and professional life. Ronnie Barker's portrayal of an incisive and mean spirited correspondent is timeless. The initially affable but less than sober guest Smythe is unable to remain tolerant of Bernard Yeast's torrent of salacious comment. Bernard never allows Smythe a moment's grace to reply so he reacts physically to the verbal assassination of his character. Mr Phillips attempts to choreograph the cameras around the set in order to capture the action as fully as possible. Unfortunately for both cameramen and the studio, the hardware collides reducing the event to the level of a circus as the cameras fail.

Mr Pertwee is called to Mr Povey's office the following day. Troutbridge TV's big hitting show never made it to the air the night before. Although everyone in the studio thought they were broadcasting to the nation, Pertwee had messed around with the cables whilst drunk and Troutbridge TV had merely relayed the BBC output through its own INDEPENDENT transmitter!



08.02.1963

TLO 2549

Episode 3

"Z Ambulances"

Henry Povey (Thunderguts).....
Floor Manager.....
Producer.....
Director.....
Vera, Mr Povey's TTV Secretary
Janet, Studio PA
Ambulance Controller
Winstanley
Mr Bates
Technical Sales Manager (Winstanley)
Alastair Scott-Hanson
Taffy Goldstein
Cameraman
Fatso Johnson
Clancy
TTV announcer.....

Richard Caldicot
Jon Pertwee
Stephen Murray
Leslie Phillips

} Janet Brown

} Michael Bates

} Tenniel Evans

} Ronnie Barker
Robin Boyle



Written by: Lawrie Wyman

Produced by: Alastair Scott Johnston

Introduction No details available
(LP SM JP ?)

Concludes: No end credits or music
"Doing an Unfortunate"

'Through the efforts of Mr Murray's production team, Troutbridge Television Service has successfully brought about a tremendous wave of complete indifference from viewers in the area. However, one member of the team - Floor Manager Pertwee - is still certain that television should be commercial as far as he is concerned. He is about to call at the Deputy Controller's office to collect his signed claim form for expenses — Ha ha — optimist!'

Regular advertisers are essential for Troutbridge TV's financial stability. Winstanley Washing Machines believe that the way to lure a bigger audience and improve sales on these products is to devise and produce a regular weekly serial in the style of successful 1963 shows like "Emergency Ward 10", a hospital drama set in a local hospital; "Z cars", police fiction using a mixture of location together with studio work and "Compact" stories based on and around glamorous and extraordinary people working in a lifestyle magazine office.

Mr Winstanley is of the opinion that the "gritty realism" in "Z Cars" and the drama portrayed in medical shows would be hugely crowd pleasing and he would be happy to advertise on a regular basis alongside a new series called "Z Ambulances" but it needs to be on the nation's screens within 2 weeks.

Mr Bates is given the task of creating the set but his completed designs fail to allow room for camera access or movement. Johnson reminds Taffy Goldstein that he is first cameraman as the show goes to run through - a situation Johnson subsequently regrets when he realises he has to be hung from a crane to film the action on set! As the Winstanley Washing Machine commercial ends prior to the programme commencing, the studio control box panics because Johnson's weight is too great for the equipment and he cannot film the action from his disadvantaged position. However, a power surge in the station's electrics ejects Johnson upwards and through the roof.

A post production meeting is held the following day with Mr Povey. "Z Ambulances" aired for just 5 seconds before the station went off air. Despite that, Pertwee had presented an extremely large expenses bill for equipment used on the hapless production; the reason given was Johnson's weight and its effect on the equipment hired by the studio.

The show ends with the stunned realisation by the production team that Taffy Goldstein was still inside the box set in the studio where he had been put the day before.



15.02.1963

TLO 3214

Episode 4

"The Westminster Interview"

Henry Povey (Thunderguts).....
The Producer.....
Taffy Goldstein
Sir Jimson Whittaker-Smythe
Floor Manager.....
The Director
Fatso Johnson
Old Westminster Guide
Vera, Mr Povey's TTV Secretary
Janet, Studio PA
Policeman.....
Gervais Batsford-Shaw.....
TTV announcer.....

Richard Caldicot
Stephen Murray

} Tenniel Evans
Jon Pertwee
Leslie Phillips

} Ronnie Barker

} Janet Brown
Michael Bates

Robin Boyle



Written by: Lawrie Wyman

Produced by: Alastair Scott Johnston

Introduction: Stephen Murray, Jon Pertwee, Leslie Phillips Concludes: "Doing an unfortunate" and show credits

'Running a television service isn't all Steptoe and Ena Sharples – there is the paper work that whizzes about from one 'In' tray to another. Troutbridge Television Service is no exception to this rule and it's been in existence long enough now for the memos to have become reasonably baffling - at least they have to Mr Phillips in the production office at 9 o'clock in the morning.'

In an unusual turn of events, Mr Phillips has arrived early at the studio; Henry Povey learns that it is as a result of Mr Phillips' alarm clock ringing 2 hours early. The day's post and memos are reviewed. Mr Phillips mentions that he has a costumed society party to go to in the evening and he is trusting Pertwee (who is currently sub-contracting the station's van for coal deliveries) to help him find something suitable.

The day's itinerary features a high profile interview with a leading MP at the House of Commons. The production crew of Messrs. Murray, Phillips and Pertwee travel to Westminster to record an interview with the Rt. Hon Jimson Whittaker-Smythe on the terrace facing The Thames. A nervous Henry Povey has also made the journey, concerned that the recording goes well. Regrettably, Whittaker-Smythe believes the Troutbridge TV production crew are in fact a pressure group who have forcibly gained access to the members' area and wish to have the satirical BBC television show "That Was The Week That Was" removed from the current schedules. After some confusion, the situation is defused and the group organises the interview and filming strategy. In pursuit of enviable publicity stills employing unique camera angles, a reluctant Mr Phillips is required to climb to an elevated position to photograph the interviewee – a position from which he falls into The Thames. At this juncture Henry Povey's major concern is the loss of the camera. A soaked Mr Phillips makes it back to the terrace and disappears to change into dry clothes as Mr Pertwee takes control of the shoot. Robin Boyle and Janet Brown arrive to interview Whittaker-Smythe and are shown through to the make-shift control Troutbridge TV have set up. Robin Boyle, at his most eloquent, introduces Sir Jimson Whittaker-Smythe after which a rather incoherent cliché ridden inconsequential series of mumblings issues forth and is are thankfully obscured by the chimes of Big Ben. At the same moment, a bizarrely attired Leslie Phillips appears, closely followed by the Palace of Westminster security personnel who are desperately trying to restrain him fearing he is a threat to the establishment. It would appear that the fresh clothes Lovable Leslie had put on were intended for the evening's costume party to which he was going dressed as Guy Fawkes!



22.02.1963

TLO 3876

Episode 5

"The Governor Returns"

The Floor Manager

Jon Pertwee

The Director.....

Leslie Phillips

The Producer.....

Stephen Murray

Henry Povey (Thunderguts).....

Richard Caldicot

Vera, Mr Povey's TTV Secretary

Girl

} Janet Brown

Lady Trench

Cmdr Stanton

Floor Manager

Fatso Johnson

} Ronnie Barker

Admiral,

Field Marshall Bullingham Trench

} Tenniel Evans

Tax Man

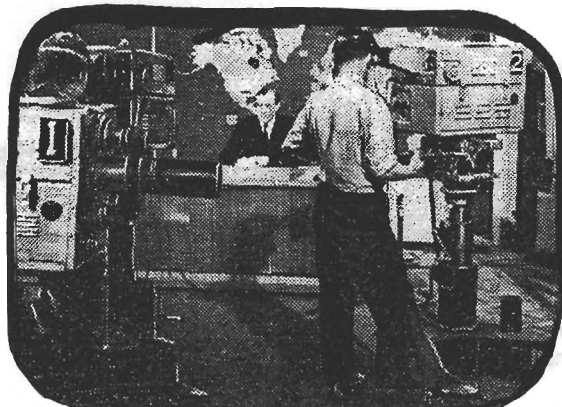
Rear Admiral Chatsworthy

Dockyard Policeman

} Michael Bates

TTV announcer.....

Robin Boyle



Written by: Lawrie Wyman

Produced by: Alastair Scott Johnston

Introduction: Jon Pertwee, Leslie Phillips, Stephen Murray

Concludes: no end credits, no music

"Doing an Unfortunate"

'There's an old saying that your past always catches up with you. Well being a shy, modest, good, clean-living, young lad, I haven't got a past so I wouldn't know (You rotter!) However, the mob running Troutbridge Television Service has the sort of past that not only catches up with them this week, but overtakes them. A visitor to the Deputy Controller Henry Povey, alias "Thunderguts", is the first person to start rocking the boat by demanding to see 'The Production Team'.'

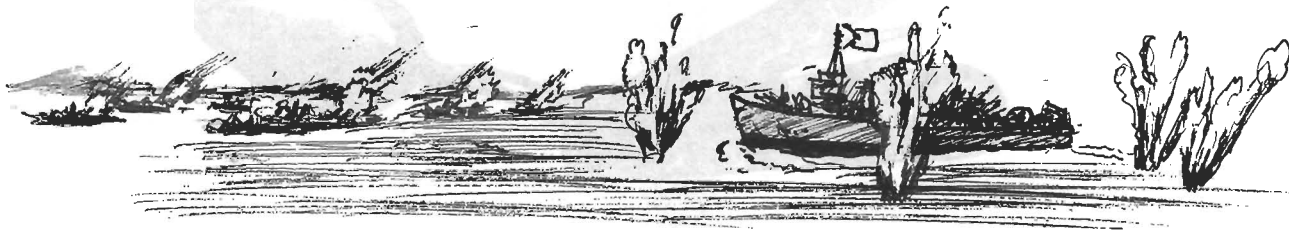
Mr Povey and his Admiral visitor keep an expectant group of employees guessing about the reasons why they have been summoned to the Deputy Controller's office. Once through the door, a confused Admiral is taken aback by his former subordinates' dress code and reprimands them for their sloppiness. He is persuaded that the former personnel are no longer serving members of Her Majesty's Royal Navy.

The meeting learns that Field Marshall Bullingham Trench, the former Governor of Zad Ougeland, is to arrive in Portsmouth shortly and Troutbridge TV has been selected to cover the event. Instantly this news is shared, Pertwee is felled with an attack of the "Twingeing Screws". It appears that Mr Pertwee would prefer not to meet the Portsmouth Dockyard Constabulary ever again so this quay side location is causing some alarm to this former naval CPO (stores).

A schedule for the event is prepared which includes Mr Povey's former command HMS Makepiece filming the incoming 'Empress of Portameyland' as she enters the Solent. The Troutbridge Television Service film crew, including Pertwee, enter the dockyard after the customary security checks and go straight to HMS Makepiece's berth. They are amazed to learn that Cmdr. Stanton is the ship's CO. They are also disappointed to discover that Makepiece's company are still on shore leave. Troutbridge TV are desperate for a successful scoop and filming the quayside arrival alongside other news gathering services is not going to impress Mr Povey. The production team of TTV feel they have sufficient naval experience to undertake the venture of navigating the vessel out into open water to film the home coming from a unique vantage point. Cmdr. Stanton, true to character, has no idea what is going on. He believes he is still with his former naval compatriots in mufti and therefore raises no objections.

The near collision between The Empress of Portaneyland and HMS Makepiece proves that Mr Phillips' navigational skills have not improved; worse still is the commotion within the Admiralty when Rear Admiral Chatsworth of Naval Intelligence signals the Home Fleet. Due to a lack of communication by Troutbridge TV personnel, the Navy are of the opinion that HMS Makepiece has been stolen by a crew from within the Iron Curtain. However, Field Marshall Bullingham Trench and his wife have now transferred to HMS Makepiece but become alarmed as they find themselves amid incoming fire from the Home Fleet who are in hot pursuit of a 'stolen' warship. Frantic signals to everyone in the locality are ignored so Makepiece is turned round and pointed towards Portsmouth. As the ship enters harbour waters, the gathered crowds - oblivious to the Solent adventures - cheer and wave as the ceremonial begins. Once again Mr Phillips collides with the quayside causing Taffy Goldstein to lose his camera equipment overboard.

Once securely docked and with the gangway in place, an officer from the Inland Revenue boards the ship looking for Mr Pertwee with respect to his tax returns and the fictitious dependents he has invented in his recent submission.



01.03.1963

TLO 4144

Episode 6

"On Safari"

The Producer.....
The Director.....
The Floor Manager.....
Henry Povey.....
Gervais Batsford-Shaw
Jock
Arnold Crump
French airport representative
Taffy Goldstein.....
Vera, Mr Povey's TTV Secretary
Maggie Crump
Stewardess
TTV announcer.....

Stephen Murray
Leslie Phillips
Jon Pertwee
Richard Caldicot

} Michael Bates

} Ronnie Barker
Tenniel Evans

} Janet Brown
Robin Boyle

Written by: Lawrie Wyman

Produced by: Alastair Scott Johnston

Introduction: Leslie Phillips, Stephen Murray, Jon Pertwee

Concludes: "Doing an Unfortunate"

Title Music, cast information

'In television, apart from your regular salary, there are all sorts of perks - or bits of bunce flying about. I mean, someone's going to cop those mod con flats in that house Barry Bucknall has been doing his nut in for months - and who gets those free Sunday papers David Frost quotes from in 'That Was the whatever it was' on Saturday night?'

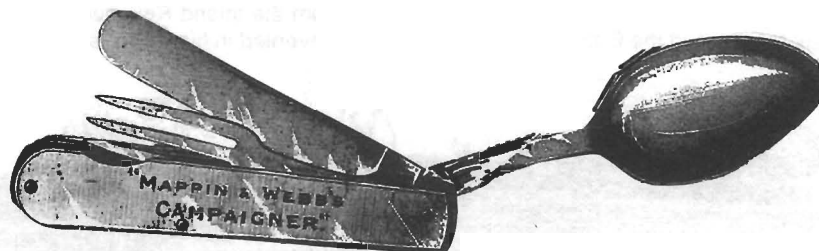
(I never doubted it!) However, one of the more legitimate fiddles is 'the-journey-at-the-company's-expense'. This time when the production team enter Mr Povey's office they find themselves going a lot further afield than they expected.

A review meeting is taking place between Mr Povey and Troutbridge Television Service's production team. The group is assessing its recent performances and trying to avoid too much criticism for under achievement. To great astonishment, Mr Povey announces that viewing figures are growing at a remarkable rate - not because people approve of the schedules or indeed the output of the station, but because a keen sense of anticipation of what might go wrong during the broadcast makes them watch. In an attempt to move the station toward the success enjoyed by other television stations, he feels the channel needs to incorporate a regular wildlife programme. Maggie and Arnold Crumb enjoy an enviable reputation with regard to natural history programmes and have been put under contract by TTV's Henry Povey, but they need a film crew to record their adventures whilst on location. Pertwee, Phillips, Murray et al. are given 24 hours to get organised for the expedition.

Once assembled on a Crumb's Cruiser, they commence their journey to Africa. In his customary fashion, Mr Phillips visits the bridge to review progress and is perturbed by the navigating officer's proficiency. After a brief dialogue, the vessel revises its course. Within minutes the vessel runs aground, to the annoyance of the captain and passengers. Arnold Crumb is of the opinion that a tug from further upstream can be relied upon to handle situations such as these. At the same moment, the pathetic toot from a dilapidated tug horn announces the imminent arrival of Nunkie to the scene. A second horn fills the air and the scene is set as two rivals attempt to gain salvage over the stricken craft. Hawsers are attached from both tugs and they succeed in splitting the cruiser in two; it then sinks.

Having completed a substantial amount of filming, TTV's production team advise the Crumbs that they are down to their last roll of film. They also suggest that it would be a good idea if they filmed some wildlife with the remaining film, instead of just the Crumbs. A terrifying roar is heard and instantaneously the Crumbs disappear into the distance leaving a trail of shiny beads as the only indication of which way they went. Pertwee fires at the source of the sound and is amused to discover the presence of Mr Phillips who had mistakenly believed he was close to cannibals and was doing what he could to keep them away. Mr Murray decides the expedition has now achieved as much as it could and flies his team home, against Pertwee's better judgement (he hates heights). During the flight, a bemused Mr Phillips returns from the flight deck announcing that he has just assisted the navigator in locating London. Upon disembarking from the plane, the pre-booked company car is nowhere in the vicinity. Ground crew, noticing the astonishment on TTV's crew's faces, enquires in French if he can help. Mr Phillips' error is greeted with dismay by his colleagues.

The journey back to the UK by airplane resulted in the entire footage shot by the team being ruined. A last minute attempt to re-shoot some sequences with wild animals (using the enclosures at London Zoo!) is unsuccessful too because Povey spots notice boards in various shots despite Mr Murray's best efforts to ensure that bars and visitors were kept out of shot!



08.03.1963

TLO 4801

Episode 7

"Ship Ahoy!"

Producer.....
Floor Manager.....
Director.....
Henry Povey (Thunderguts).....
Admiral
Taffy Goldstein
Nunkie
Vera, Mr Povey's TTV Secretary
Janet, Studio PA
Ironbridge
Coxs'n
Cmdr Bracewell
Cmdr Stanton
Intelligence Officer
Dumbo
TTV announcer.....

Stephen Murray
Jon Pertwee
Leslie Phillips
Richard Caldicot

} Tenniel Evans

} Janet Brown

} Michael Bates

} Ronnie Barker

Robin Boyle



Written by: Lawrie Wyman

Produced by: Alastair Scott Johnston

Introduction: No credits
(SM JP LP ?)

Concludes: No end credits or music
"Doing an Unfortunate"

'The snag about working for a big broadcasting organisation is that usually you can never get at the bloke at the top. No matter how many people you see they always have to refer to somebody higher up on another floor. There's absolutely no hope of you getting to see the old fool who keeps dropping the clangers. I should add that I'm referring to Troutbridge Television of course - not the BBC. But at the Troutbridge Studios it's a red carpet day as the production team and Henry Povey are awaiting TTV's Director General'

Floor Manager Jon Pertwee is wearing a very risqué hand painted tie. He is reminded that Troutbridge Television Service management might not approve. The assembled managers and production team review Cmdr. Bracewell's proposal regarding a documentary about the Royal Navy. Henry Povey believes the scheme is flawed but the decision goes against him and the programme is commissioned. Subsequent programme discussions reveal that the filming opportunities to the station are to be restricted to filming aboard a disused minesweeper on its way to the breaker's, in order to reduce the risk of unwarranted damage to MOD property and budgets by the incompetent ex HMS Troutbridge personnel.

The production team travel out to the minesweeper without serious issue despite Mr Phillips' incomparable ability to try and persuade an experienced Coxswain to revise his approach and mooring proficiency in favour of the Phillips method. Once alongside the virtually derelict vessel, everyone manages to use the rope ladder to climb aboard except Mr Phillips who falls into the sea twice. On board the minesweeper, Cmdr. Stanton gleefully welcomes his old shipmates and they share anecdotes and a nostalgia for times past.

An agreed sequence of shots requires Mr Phillips to leave the minesweeper and film from the towing ship, but he is given strict orders not to touch ANYTHING whilst aboard the other vessel. Messrs Murray and Pertwee remain aboard the minesweeper but become alarmed as the scheduled rendezvous time at Barrow passes. They also notice a dramatic narrowing of the seaway to both port and starboard bows, making them deduce that they have now deviated from their original destination and are currently moving up the Manchester Ship Canal. Without warning, the tow ship and the minesweeper stop abruptly. In the quiet, the sound of ticking is heard coming from a "big fat round thing...."

Terrified at the possible damage they could cause by Mr Phillips' intervention, a wistful plea for Nunkie to appear and pull them out of danger is miraculously answered by the strained toot toot of his erstwhile tug.

Back in the open sea, Nunkie inadvertently tows the minesweeper into a Home Fleet exercise. Mistakenly, the Royal Navy believes a target ship has been towed into range for them for target practice. Live ammunition rains down around them; fearful of the consequences of being hit and the live mine going off simultaneously, they wait till they think they are out of range. Attempts to ditch the mine overboard result in the minesweeper ship's crew breaking some detonator spikes off, but persistence results in the object finally being cast adrift and a degree of safety returning to the vessel. Nunkie turns about and, seeing what he believes is salvage on the open sea, he heads straight for it. Despite protestations from everyone aboard the derelict minesweeper he is towing, he will not relinquish his 'salvage' and he lifts the object onto his tug. He refuses to acknowledge the shouts and protestations from the minesweeper, believing the rabble to be jealous of his find. Unaware of the imminent danger he has put everyone in, the tow rope between themselves and Nunkie's tug is out. Realisation comes too late: as Nunkie hears the warnings and ticking he leaps into the sea, only to witness the explosive end of his faithful sea going livelihood as he is showered with its debris.

15.03.1963

TLO 5484

Episode 8

"The Portarneyland Election"

Floor Manager.....
Director
Producer.....
Horatio Singleton Trent
Harold Golfball
Rear Admiral Ironbridge (TTV Director General)
Henry Povey (Thunderguts).....
Vera, Mr Povey's TTV Secretary
Mrs Washington-Bert
Sub Lt General Samuel Pepys Washington-Bert
(Portarneyland Navy)

Johnson
Prime Minister
Taffy Goldstein
Rear Admiral Ironbridge
House Of Commons debate:

Jon Pertwee
Leslie Phillips
Stephen Murray

} Michael Bates

} Richard Caldicot

} Janet Brown

} Ronnie Barker

} Tenniel Evans

Richard Caldicot
Ronnie Barker
Janet Brown
Tenniel Evans
Richard Caldicot
Stephen Murray
Janet Brown
Tenniel Evans
Richard Caldicot
Michael Bates
Ronnie Barker

TTV announcer..... Robin Boyle

Written by: Lawrie Wyman

Produced by: Alastair Scott Johnston

Introduction: Jon Pertwee, Leslie Phillips, Stephen Murray

Concludes: Full credits and cast information
"Doing an unfortunate"

'All television stations operate a foreign news service. With Troutbridge Television the news doesn't come from a staff of reporters abroad – it's usually a dodgy old bit of muck raking which has been included in a letter from a relative of Mr Pertwee's living in the rough section of Cairo.' However, every now and then a story from abroad is big enough to send out a film unit to cover it, and that is what the Deputy Controller, Henry Povey, is contemplating this morning.

A request to cover the forthcoming Portameyland elections is received by Henry Povey, who in turn briefs his production crew about the event. Troutbridge Television's Director General Rear Admiral Ironbridge, Royal Navy (retired) has secured passage for his film unit on a destroyer sailing by Portameyland.

Aboard, it is beholden on Mr Phillips to visit the ship's bridge. As the ship approaches Portarneyland, Messrs. Murray, Pertwee and Phillips reminisce about previous tours of duty there. They appear somewhat surprised by the particular approach the ship makes toward the island until Mr Phillips points out that the navigating officer has not got a clue how to read his maps and needed a little help.

Once ashore, initial exchanges between Portameyland officials and the TTV crew results in the confiscation of their film equipment and the team being driven off in a secure vehicle to the war torn capital. Upon arrival, they are presented with an indeclinable proposition by a local war lord to put on the Portameyland Naval Uniform and make ready Portameyland's only warship "Popadom" for action. A request to speak to the British Ambassador elicits the declaration that he has already been placed on board as Chief Stoker. Appreciating that their only option is to make a rapid exodus aboard the Popadom in the middle of the night, plans are made.

Meanwhile, in the UK, Parliament is debating the uprising and election issues in Portameyland and decides to send the Royal Navy in to quell the rebels.

Harold Golfball, a self appointed high ranking Portameyland security guard on the Popadom, goes ashore at midnight every evening to take delivery of a meal prepared for him. As he leaves the ship, the TTV crew releases the fore and aft and sheds the gangway. Henry Golfball fires his overly large blunderbuss at the ship's bridge but the recoil is so great that it spins him round so that he demolishes the wooden jetty before being hurled into the water.

Mr Phillips removes the remaining quayside structure as he manoeuvres the vessel seaward, and in so doing ejects Sub Lt General Samuel Pepys Washington-Bert of the Portameyland Navy into the sea.

As Popadom enters open water, ship's company discovers an unexpected passenger on board – Mrs Samuel Pepys Washington-Bert. An additional worry manifests itself when looming over the horizon with guns blazing is a flotilla of British warships sent by the British parliament to quell the rebellion on Portameyland.

Desperate situations call for desperate measures. Pertwee is told to signal the Royal Navy by using the only means available on the ancient Popadom, an Aldis lamp. Unfortunately, Pertwee can neither remember the Morse code nor operate the lamp. The only



course of action available to the crew and ship is to unconditionally surrender. A month later Popadom is escorted into Portsmouth Harbour by 3 battleships, 4 frigates, a destroyer and a cruiser. Popadom is unceremoniously bounced into her berth in the dockyard by Mr Phillips. Disgruntled and dishevelled, Mrs Samuel Pepys Washington-Bert demands compensation for repairs to Portarneyland's premier battleship.

Mr Povey races aboard Popadom to collect the much anticipated and highly prized unique film shot in Portarneyland during the political uprising. Upon learning of the fate of the camera equipment and absence of all journalistic endeavour, he agrees to the request of returning the Popadom, along with Mrs Samuel Pepys Washington-Bert and the reluctant temporary crew, to Portarneyland in order that they retrieve the confiscated equipment belonging to Troutbridge Television Service.



22.03.1963

TLO 5760

Episode 9

Director.....
 Producer.....
 Floor Manager.....
 Henry Povey.....
 Vera, Mr Povey's TTV Secretary
 Captain Bell
 Fatso Johnson
 Dumbo
 Policeman
 Cmdr Bracewell
 Taffy Goldstein
 Sebastian Pertwee
 Admiral
 TTV announcer.....
 Written by: Lawrie Wyman

Leslie Phillips
 Stephen Murray
 Jon Pertwee
 Richard Caldicot
 Janet Brown

} Ronnie Barker

} Michael Bates

} Tenniel Evans

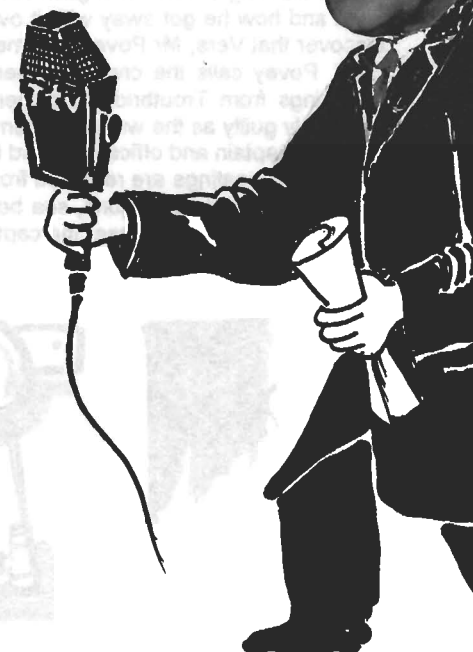
Robin Boyle
 Produced by: Alastair Scott Johnston

Introduction: not known
 (LP SM JP ?)

Concludes: no details available

'Many of you will have heard the old adage...'

This show is currently missing, perhaps permanently lost. By reviewing the character list it is possible to deduce that Lawrie Wyman is building the nautical storyline further back into the series. Current details courtesy of Tony Reynolds who has used the BBC written archives for his research.



29.03.1963

TLO 6455

Episode 10

"Back in the Navy"

Chief Petty Officer Pertwee / Floor Manager TTV.....
Sub Lt Phillips / Director TTV.....
No 1 / Producer TTV.....
Capt Henry Povey (Thunderguts).....
(un)Able Seaman Fatso Johnson / 1st Cameraman
Dockyard foreman
Policeman
Cmdr Pearson
AS Taffy Goldstein / 2nd Cameraman
Vera (Mr Povey's former TTV Secretary now a Wren)
Wren
(TTV) Announcer.....

Jon Pertwee
Leslie Phillips
Stephen Murray
Richard Caldicot
Ronnie Barker

Michael Bates

Tenniel Evans

Janet Brown
Robin Boyle



Written by: Lawrie Wyman

Produced by: Alastair Scott Johnston

Introduction: cast sequence not known
(SM JP LP ?)

Concludes: details not known

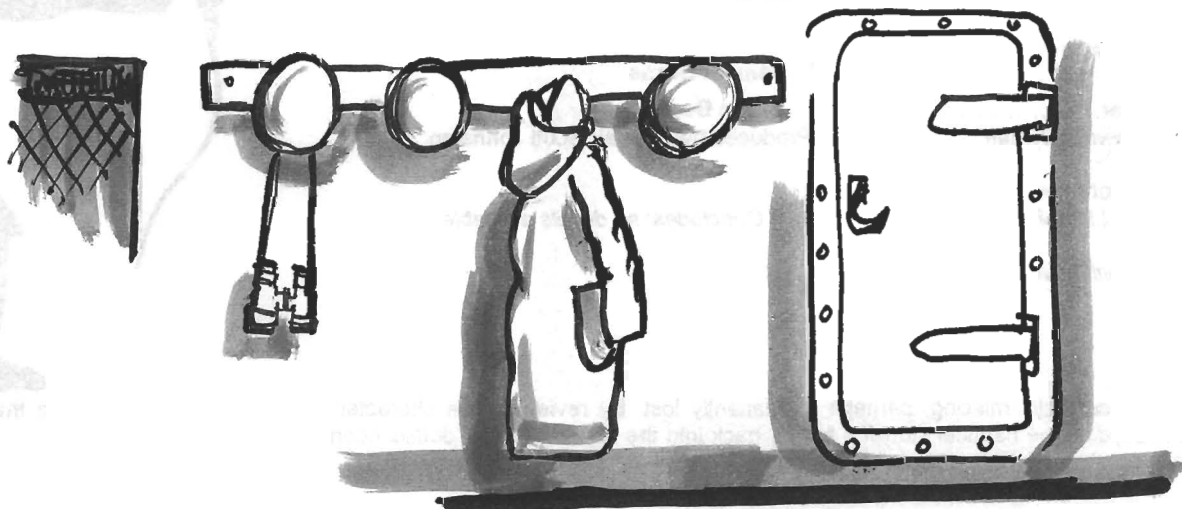
'Sometimes when I'm at home in the evenings, Mrs. Boyle and I (interruption by Phillips and Pertwee) sometimes my wife and I [Happy Birthday Dear - card following] we sit at home in the evenings wondering what load of codswallop will turn up on the TV next. If we switch to the TTV channel, we wonder if anything will turn up at all and when Henry Povey has had to send Mr Murray's production team out filming; a blank screen is a lot safer. Oh PS, Very Happy Birthday Dear

Henry Povey has decided that the next episode of "Ship Ahoy" is to be filmed on location at the Admiralty Records. The news fills Pertwee with acute anxiety because his relative Tobias Pertwee was working in the building and was responsible for signing the demob papers for the whole of Troutbridge's company before moth-balling the ship. Upon arriving at Admiralty Records, Pertwee has to be forcibly introduced to the new CO Cmdr. Pearson, Tobias Pertwee having recently retired.

Cmdr Pearson appears somewhat surprised to see Phillips, Pertwee and Murray standing before him and questions the reasoning for all three to visit the site when they could have waited a day and received the papers in the post like everyone else. Mystified, the production crew enquire how they could film "Ship Ahoy" for Troutbridge Television Service without travelling to the locality. Cmdr. Pearson explains that 'papers' did not refer to any formal Admiralty documentation permitting access to the site for filming but rather to their recall papers for the Royal Navy. Pertwee collapses. Tobias Pertwee had overstretched his authority by releasing an entire ship's company into civvy street. Furthermore, Troutbridge was never destined to be 'moth-balled'. It is evident that Pertwee knew more about the state of affairs than he ever let on.

Upon returning to the main gate at Portsmouth Dockyard, the Naval Police try to get Pertwee to explain what he stole, where it went and how he got away with it over their heads! Pertwee remains indifferent. The former crew of Troutbridge reassemble and discover that Vera, Mr Povey's former secretary at Troutbridge TV, has joined up in order to keep a working relationship with him. Capt. Povey calls the crew together for a briefing. Meanwhile, dockyard personnel are busy removing the protective film and wrappings from Troutbridge's upper decks. CPO Pertwee is vainly trying to prevent the work from proceeding, and looking extremely guilty as the wraps are removed. Captain Povey becomes extremely curious. Nonetheless, Povey asks CPO Pertwee to pipe the Captain and officers aboard HMS Troutbridge, which Pertwee manages to do after a little practice.

As the final coatings are removed from the shell of the vessel, a bemused dockyard foreman reports to Captain Povey stating that Troutbridge has lost its guns, sea boats, railings, lifebelts, rafts, radar and everything unboltable or unscrewable from its decks. Pertwee attempts to 'please' the captain by blowing a tune on his bosun's whistle but questions need to be answered.....



Back in the Wardroom

Laughter in the Air "Pardon me, Your Sitcom's showing"

introduced by Dickie Henderson. No accurate date for this January 1979 celebration but hopefully somebody will let us have the correct broadcasting details soon!

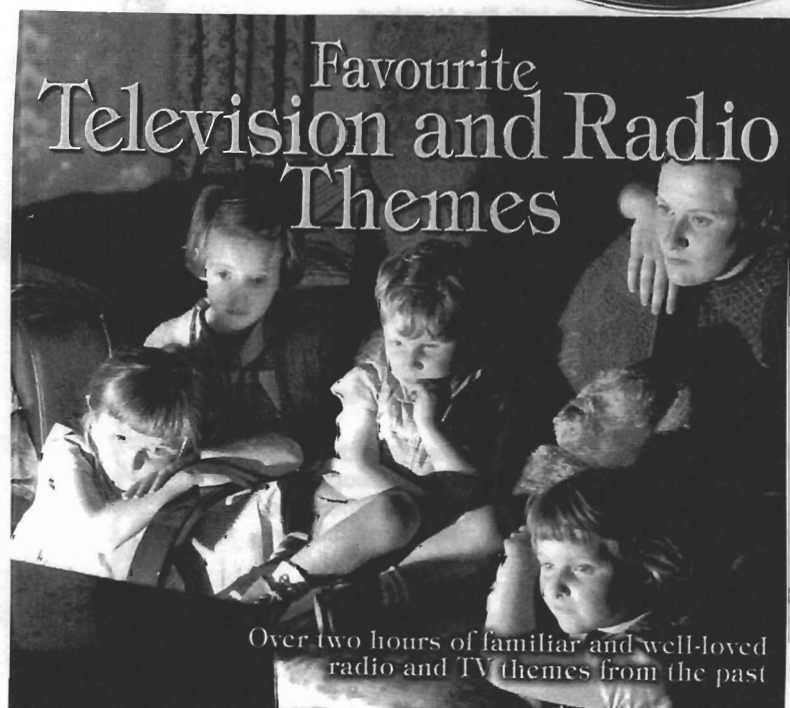
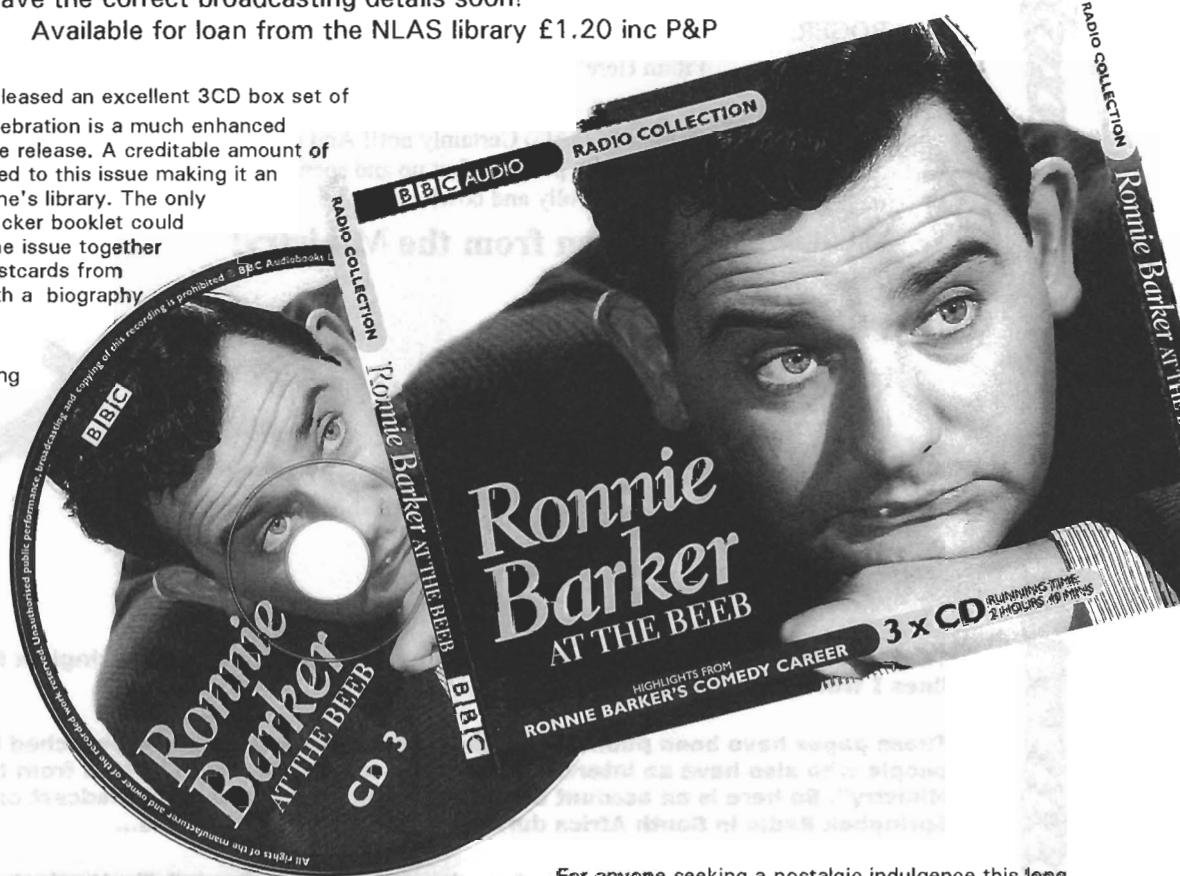
Available for loan from the NLAS library £1.20 inc P&P

Ronnie Barker has had released an excellent 3CD box set of his time at the BBC. The celebration is a much enhanced version of the 1997 cassette release. A creditable amount of extra material has been added to this issue making it an excellent addition to everyone's library. The only disappointment is that a thicker booklet could have been included with the issue together with a few more photos/postcards from Ronnie's career together with a biography.

ISBN 0-563-52770-6

price varies hugely depending on retailer

£6.99 to £14.99

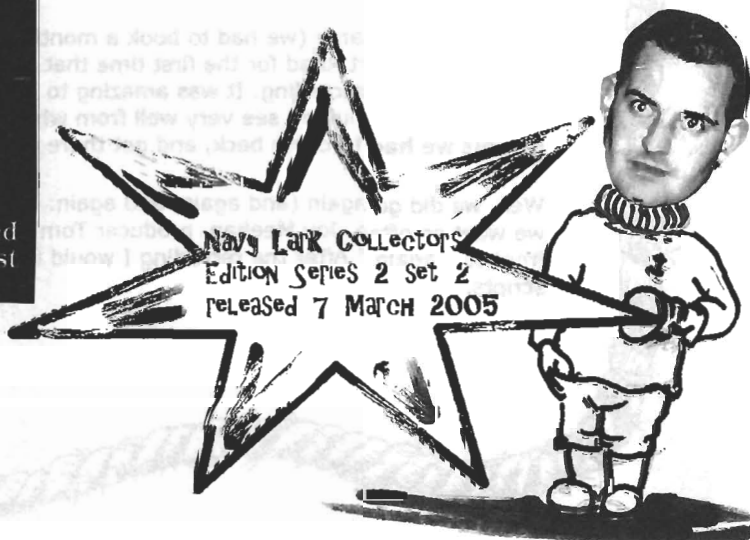


For anyone seeking a nostalgic indulgence this long winter, a new CD has been released featuring the signature tune to The Navy Lark together with a host of other radio and television shows of the past. This particular compilation boasts original recordings together with digitally restored material taken from previously low-grade master tapes. The sound quality is very warm and rich, perhaps reminiscent of the larger valve radiograms found in many houses once upon a time. The box set has an informative booklet which provides notes about each programme. For those of a 'certain age' this is a real trip down memory lane.

www.bestofbritish.co.uk

tel/fax 01778 342814

£13.00 including P&P (not available in the shops)



A Springbok Radio Memory

JOHN: General Assistance Department. Number One speaking.
ROGER: Hello! This is Number Two.
SIR G: Pitkin Here!
HUMBERT Excuse me...
ANNOUNCER: (HANKIE GAG) Certainly not!! And now Springbok Radio invites you to lean back, put your feet up and spend the next half hour with the briefcase, broly and bowler brigade...
MILDRED: **The Men from the Ministry!**



... a personal account
by Robin Davis

These familiar lines above are how "Men" opened every week on Springbok Radio - lines I will *never* forget.

These pages have been published to the internet because I was approached by a few people who also have an interest in the radio comedy series "The Men from the Ministry". So here is an account of my involvement in the series broadcast on Springbok Radio in South Africa during the good old days of radio...

When I was about 12 years old, one of my classmates would often talk like Humbert Snetherswaite, one of the regular characters from the series played by Tommy Read. Humbert, a pensioner, has a speech impediment - and makes a splash sound with every word containing an "s". (A bit hard to describe here!) I asked my friend Michael why he spoke like that in class and he told me it was Humbert Snetherswaite from "The Men from the Ministry" broadcast on Springbok Radio on a Saturday evening. (We had no TV in South Africa then)

Eager to know who he was referring to, I tuned in the next Saturday evening and took an instant liking to the programme and appreciated the humour. Later, another friend, Russell - who had by this time also become an avid listener - told me he'd met John Simpson (Number One) who had been to their home to install a dictaphone for his mother. They got talking, and John informed Russell that they record the programme (and others like "Father, dear Father", "Friends and Neighbours" and "The Navy Lark" at the South African Broadcasting Corporation studios in Durban, about 20 km from Pinetown where we all lived. Needless to say, I had my mother telephone and make a booking for us to attend a recording one Thursday evening.

The day finally came (we had to book a month or two in advance) and I walked into the SABC offices in Old Fort Road for the first time that evening and joined about 150 other people as the audience at the recording. It was amazing to see the actors behind the voices from the radio, and although I couldn't see very well from where we were sitting, I was hooked, and told my parents we had to come back, and get there early next time so we could sit in the front.

Well, we did go again (and again, and again...) and got there early to get a front seat. Actually, we went so often, Joy Meehan, producer Tom's wife would say, "Oh hello, the Davis's in the front row again!" After the recording I would nervously ask Barry Meehan for a copy of the scripts.

The programmes were so popular, as we left, another 150 people would be waiting outside to take our seats for the recording of another 2 episodes of "Friends", "Navy", "Father" or whatever was on the air at the time. Over the years, Tom Meehan had many "live" comedy shows on Springbok Radio, all recorded in Studio 6 in the Old Fort Road studios of the SABC in Durban (not to mention the many, many other programmes he and Barry recorded in Studio 7).

I enjoyed watching the show so much, my sister and I would put on performances of "Men from the Ministry" in a "studio" at home and invite the neighbours to be "the audience". My sister and I would do all the voices. I recorded the music links off the air and had my parents as the effects operators, playing the music in - not always on que!! I said to my parents I wanted to work at the SABC and record programmes like this.



Colleague (and friend) Phyl Stander and myself at the second to last recording session of "Men" at the Nederburg Theatre in New Germany, outside Durban, South Africa. (1985)

Phyl has worked on the programme longer than anyone else, and recorded the first show at the SABC studios. (We used to tease Phyl about having to get her headphones built into her hair-dol!!) "Hello Phyleeeeee!"

Eight years later and after numerous tours of the studio complex lead by (now very good friend) Mrs Helen McCulloch, I was fortunate enough to join the Radio Operations staff and soon learned the craft of playing sound effects and music at "Men" recordings in Studio 6. My dream come true!

The series ran until December 1985 when Springbok Radio closed, and I worked on the last episode recorded for the station.

I took a transfer to the television Video Editing department a few years after Springbok closed, and in October 1993 the show was revived on Radio South Africa, and I edited a short 2 minute package for the SABC's breakfast TV show "Good Morning South Africa".

Seventy one episodes of "The Men from the Ministry" ran on Radio South Africa for just over a year before it was dropped because of programme changes to the station which, if I'm not mistaken was at about the time the name changed to SAfm 104 - 107.

Sadly "Men" went off the air for the last time, but has not been lost forever. Fortunately there are some recordings of the show floating around out there. Strangely enough many are in America and Canada (see the links below). I only managed to salvage 2 episodes. The SABC gave hundreds of old "shadow recording" tapes to the local Blind Society for their recorded books in the mid eighties. I wish I'd thought of saving some when they were thrown out, but I didn't think at the time how valuable those tapes would become. (Perhaps they were of more value to Tape Aids for the Blind at the time.) I am also sorry (as are many other people) that the SABC didn't archive it's local material!!! Perhaps it was because we used to churn out those radio programmes week after week, and sadly became so blasé about them. No one ever gave it a thought that one day someone, somewhere would love to hear those old radio shows again....

What happened, happened and happened for a reason -



- 18 -

1. CHARLIE: Silence. You're all prisoners of war now.
2. JOHNSON: Oooh-er. He's still here. I thought you'd come to rescue us, sir.
3. NO.1: Not exactly, I'm afraid.
4. PHILLIPS: We're prisoners of war too, apparently.
5. PERTWEE: And as such - according to the Geneva convention I demand my government shall be informed of my rank, name and number in order that....
6. NO.1: All right Chief, Let's not get carried away too. There's a very simple way of clearing this up. We must contact someone in authority.
7. PHILLIPS: But we can't sir. (WHISPER) Don't forget we can't tell anybody what we're doing, or who we are.
8. CHARLIE: We know who you are all right. You're 'Itler and he's Goering. (CHUCKLES) When the war's over I'll be able to write my memoirs about this.
9. NO.1: Mr. Granthemum - the war is over.
10. TAFFY: And has been for years and years.
11. PERTWEE: But if you shut us up in that larder another one will most likely start.
12. PHILLIPS: Couldn't you ring the local police or something? They'd tell you.
13. CHARLIE: Don't worry, I'm just going to. Martha - cover them with the gun while I phone up and tell Fred to get the cells ready.

1. MARTHA: Very well Charlie.
2. TAFFY: Before you go any further I may as well warn you that if you do anything nasty I shall phone my Uncle Edwin the solicitor and ironmonger and have you sued for alienation of his nephew's affections for breathing.
3. JOHNSON: And while you're about it Taffy, you can get him to write a letter to tell 'em that I'm not happy. It's true you know - I'm not the sort to complain as a rule but if anyone wants to know - I am not happy.
4. PERTWEE: We don't, so shut up, natter box.
5. CHARLIE: Watch them Martha - I'm going to phone the station.
6. FX: PHONE UP
7. GLADYS: (DISTORT) Hang on a minute or I'll drop a stitch.
8. CHARLIE: Well drop it, Gladys. This is an urgent military call.
9. GLADYS: Suit yourself but if your balaclava helmet has a little hole in it don't blame me. Number please?
10. CHARLIE: Give me Fred at the police station.
11. GLADYS: Oh Charlie you're not going to start your German spy game again are you?
12. CHARLIE: Put me through, Gladys - and don't charge me for it either. It's work of national importance.
13. FX: PHONE RINGING (AT OTHER END).
14. FRED: North Percuil police here.
(DISTORT)

